

The spy in the shimmering cloak

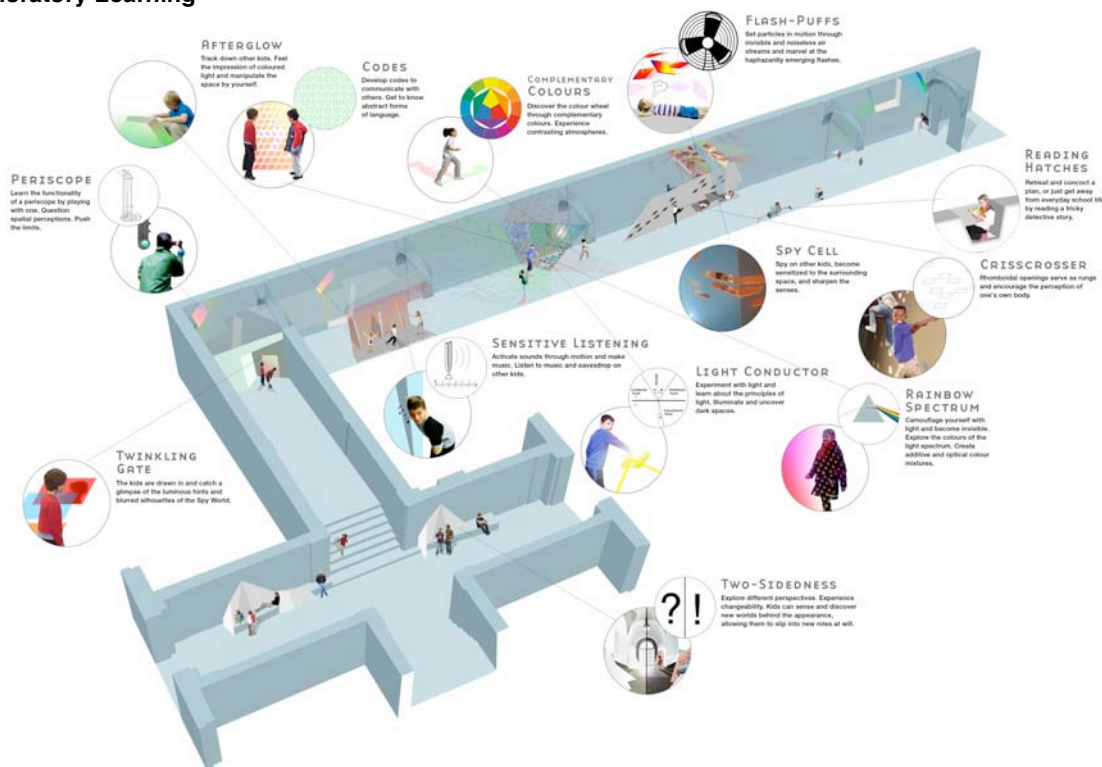
The Baupiloten create space for “exploratory learning” at the Carl Bolle Elementary School in Berlin-Moabit

In the process of converting Carl Bolle Elementary into a full-time school, the Baupiloten have installed a leisure area in the listed building in order to allow the children a rhythmical exchange between learning and free time. As a result, the school is not only an educational institution but also living space.

Form Follows Kids’ Fiction

The Baupiloten invited the pupils to workshops in order to learn about their ideas and desires regarding the redesigning of the school. The story of the “Spy with the shimmering cloak” emerged from these workshops, eventually becoming the “storyboard” for the design of a spacious hallway that had previously been inaccessible. In accordance with the school’s own sports-oriented motto of “language and movement”, the hallway was converted into a leisure area that encourages “exploratory learning”. Through experiencing the architecture and newly created optical and acoustic space, the children can track down the “spy” while also learning about the process of scientific observation in a playful environment. They can move along climbing walls, observe space from different perspectives, or find some alone time in the various reading hatches. While the pupils helped develop the ideas, the Baupiloten were there to encourage their curiosity and exploratory spirit. The fixtures/installations appear as a snowy landscape within the building, lightly adorning and disguising the pre-existing furnishings while simultaneously allowing parts of the original structure shine through. Under the white surface, various parts of the installation shimmer red, blue, or green, delineating its different areas.

Exploratory Learning



The drawing depicts the phenomenological aspects of the “Spy with the shimmering cloak” and the many things that can be discovered within it. The pupils can experience the **idea of the periscope**, explore the **colour spectrum**, learn about **complementary colours**, reflect on **light conductors**, or even invent codes with which they can assume the role of the spy and leave or send secret messages to communicate with the other children.

The Individual Elements of the Remodelling

Entrance Gallery The former courtyard passage was renovated according to the regulations for historical monuments and redesigned to offer the pupils a magical and mysterious entrance into the school. It is here that the school day begins and ends. Accordingly, the space has two faces. Upon entering, one passes through what appears to be a calm, white, snowy landscape. Exiting the space, one is surrounded by the colourful world of the school day with a gallery of the pupils’ work. The gallery is adorned with “snow drifts” which cover part of the pre-existing structure but do not interfere with its material. The back of the “snow drifts” conceals a seating area and exhibition space. This is where the children wait for their parents and show them their work. The “snow drifts” are also acoustic absorbers that reduce noise level. These two faces of the school’s entrance hall already provide

pupils and visitors a glimpse of the “Spy with the shimmering cloak”, who’s colourful light shines through the “Twinkling Gate”.

The **Twinkling Gate** also functions as the entrance to the new and informative world of recreation. Directly behind it a series of colourfully lit swings can be occupied by “guards” or “greeters”. The gate is composed of a material that is partially transparent but also reflects light. In this sense, it functions much like a Venetian mirror.

„The spy is drawn in by a colourful shadow and he begins to do what he does best. The guards are hidden. But when the spy turns around, his cloak begins to shimmer! But he can't be identified.”

The **Sensitive Listening** functions like an oversized organ that not only can play music but also tell stories. When a child sits or leans on one of the keys, a song or audio book will be played. This is made possible by built-in MP3-players that have been connected to sensors.

„And the spy? He is secretly watching from around the corner. His ears perk up, but he can't hear anything. Or maybe he can? He eavesdrops. Voices and singing can be heard.”

At the **Wall of Disguises** one can invent secret languages, control reflected light, and design codes. The wall is adorned with small, specially layered Plexiglas panels that can be turned to reflect the coloured light in different ways or let the light shine through. The light reflectors at the base and on the walls of the structure contain the entire colour spectrum and project complementary colours on the opposite wall.

„The spy's disguise is tricky. At first he removes it and mingles with the children. Then he freezes and remains motionless in the spy mirror while examining the reflections made by the children. He watches over everything very closely. Are the children sending secret codes?”

The **Spy Wall** is used for climbing, hiding, and observing the scene. In the so-called “**Spy Cell**”, the children can occupy a high observation post and survey the scene through observation slits, spy holes, mirrors and magnifying glasses. They can also secretly get an overview of the room from behind the Venetian mirrors. However, if the light is turned on, the mirror becomes transparent and their cover is blown.

„The spy dashes around the corner. Behind him, in front of him, above him: children are everywhere! He runs, climbs, and jumps in the “spy cell”. There the “Flash-Puffs” begin to tremble and eventually blow his cover. The children have found him! Everything is topsy-turvy!”

A number of reading benches and more swings are located in a quieter area in the back of the parlour. Here the children have the chance to retreat, read, and relax during their free time. The **periscope** also offers another view of the parlour. In the parlour’s back wall, a postern has been installed through which the children can exit, enter, or simply disappear.

„And the spy? He keeps running, laying false trails, disappearing, and then reappearing. Where is he now? At the periscope? Did he escape? Who will capture him now?”

The **Baupiloten** are a group of students at the Institute for Architecture within the Berlin Technical University’s Department for Planning, Construction, and the Environment. Under the leadership of architect Susanne Hofmann AA dipl, the Baupiloten conduct their studies through the realization of actual building measures. The students experience the architectural curriculum as a praxis-oriented ideal and take part in all phases of design and construction.

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Project Manager: Dipl.-Ing. Constantin von der Mülbe

Start of Planning: October 2006 **Start of Construction:** March 2007 **Completion:** October 2008

Client: Jahn, Mack und Partner

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